

Without humility, one cannot receive God's word

"Babe, I love you," sings Dennis DeYoung in the hit song he wrote for the rock band Styx. It was 1979. "Babe" was on *Cornerstone*, the band's ninth album. It went triple platinum, selling over three million copies.

The last time Dennis visited Vancouver was in 1981. Styx had just released *Paradise Theater*, their tenth album, which also went triple platinum, thanks to phenomenal songs like "Too Much Time on My Hands" and "The Best of Times."

But in 2014, Dennis finally returned to British



Global Theatre
C.S. Morrissey

Columbia, with six other musicians alongside him to play a concert, "The Music of Styx," at the Hard Rock Vancouver. One of them, on background vocals, was his wife Suzanne.

Dennis introduced Suzanne to the audience as the woman he sings about in the song "Babe." He also pointed out that their marriage has lasted forty-four years. After all these years, the song still

stands strong as an inspired testimony to true love.

Although he is himself sixty-seven years old, Dennis sang all the songs at this year's Vancouver concert with the same stunning, mega-talented voice and passionate conviction that he had in his youth.

Dennis and Suzanne are both Catholics. Both half-Italian, they grew up in the same Chicago neighborhood. They met at the ages of seventeen and fifteen as visitors to a dance at Mendel Catholic High School.

"My wife is a good Cath-

olic girl," Dennis once told an interviewer. "That's more impressive than 35 million albums sold. I'll tell you. She's a



great woman."

Dennis did write many

remarkable songs for the band Styx, but the band included many other talented musicians and songwriters. Dennis' former band mate,

guitarist James Young, himself observed how the group's work witnesses to a higher power.

"What Styx has, and what Styx brings, comes from a higher place. And it flows through us. Music is just this incredible force that has the power to soothe, to calm, to inspire, and in the best cases to heal and motivate. We are the stewards to this incredible power," said James.

But the band broke up in 1983. Rivalries and disagreements got the better of them. They reunited in 1992, but split up again in 1992. Then there was a 1995 reunion and a 1999 split. At that point, Styx got Lawrence Gowan, still with them today, to take over from Dennis on lead vocals and keyboards.

With the distance of years, James Young commented in 2011 on the old tensions. "As arrogant as I may have been, Dennis taught me the lesson of humility," he reflected. "I learned that I've got to compromise a little bit, but compromise can lead to success."

Still, Dennis now tours not with Styx but with his own band. They play the greatest hits of Styx to audiences like the lucky one that got to see Dennis' impressive show here in British Columbia on March 21.

The dynamics of human conflict are an unedifying spectacle. Those who live by gossip, stoking rivalries, have succumbed to a satanic force. The name in Greek for Satan used by the New Testament literally means "Slanderer."

Conduits for the higher power, such as people who channel the gift of beauty, can quickly succumb to the satanic force. Its dynamics in human conflict are familiar: Someone assumes they know how to do something

better than others, so they coldly set themselves at odds with them. They slander them, deluding themselves all the while that they are doing nothing wrong. Although from an objective point of view they can be seen as having succumbed to a diabolical pattern of rivalry, subjectively they see themselves as having only the purest and most righteous of motives.

We see the same dynamics, played out to their logical conclusion, in those who persecuted Jesus. In an exemplary way, Jesus himself has exposed the force of rivalry for what it is: namely, diabolical.



On the same day that Dennis played his Vancouver concert, Pope Francis preached about this subject in Rome. The leaders of the people persecuted Jesus, said Francis, because

of their lack of humility: "Because these people were not open to God's word; they were enclosed within their egoism."

To reject humility is to reject God's word, explained Francis. Yet this rejection often takes the form of people pretending to accept God's word. In reality, however, they are using it only as a means of pursuing their own fancies: "This is God's word, but I interpret it according to my own interests!"

This lack of true humility is a big problem in the spiritual life. "Without humility, one cannot welcome and receive God's word," insisted the Pope. Moreover, only with humility can one actually pray properly, observed Francis.

In addition to the inspired love song he wrote for his wife, Dennis also once set to music a beautifully humble and heartfelt prayer to God. It was a hit for Styx in 1990: "Show Me the Way."

Sometimes even rock stars can teach lessons in humility and prayer.

C.S. Morrissey is an associate professor of philosophy at Redeemer Pacific College. □